

2013

# WHAT?: Visual Interpretations of the Miscommunication Between the Hearing and Deaf

Virginia Shou

*Virginia Commonwealth University*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Graphic Design Commons](#)

© The Author

---

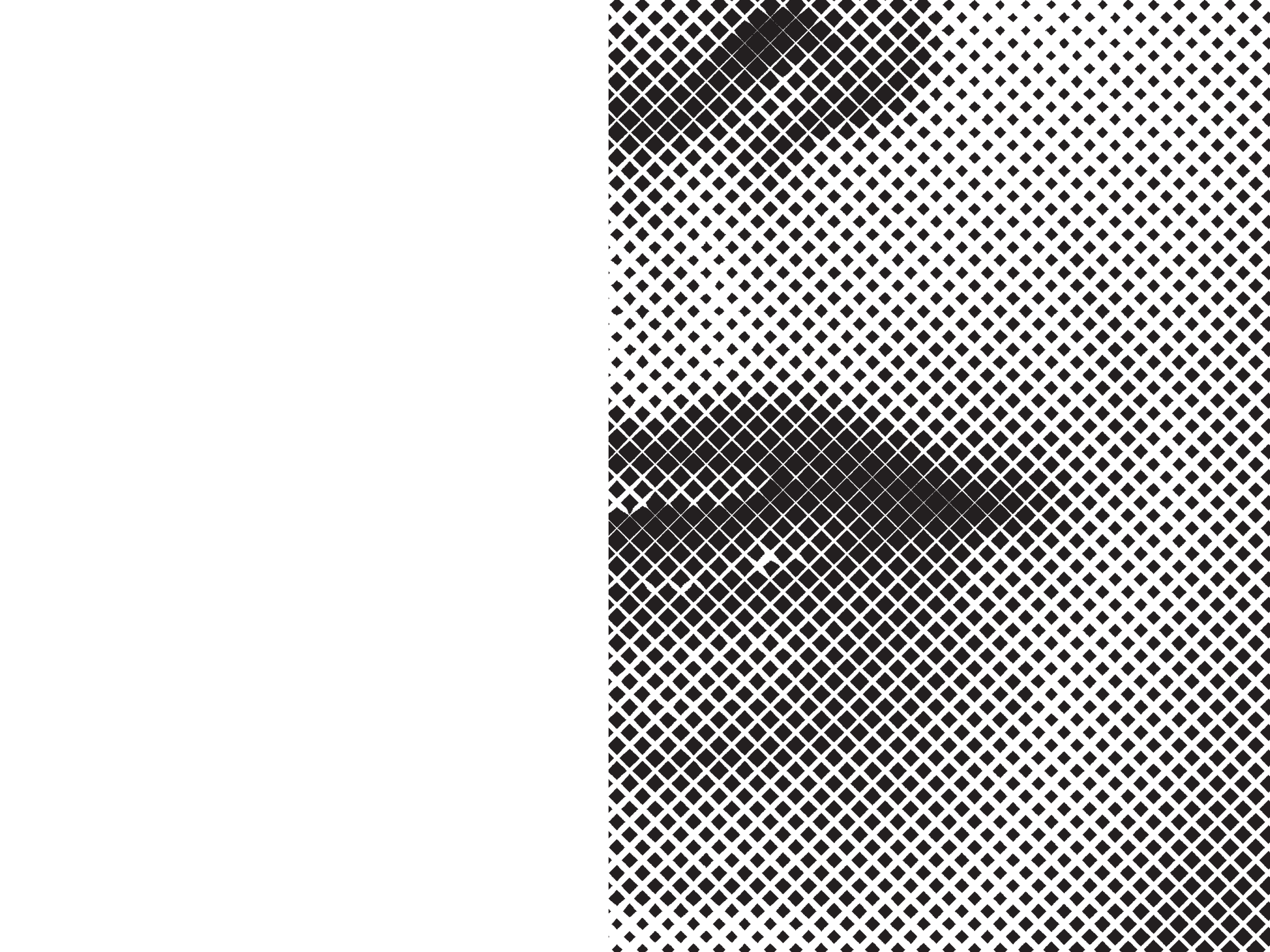
Downloaded from

<http://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/3125>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact [libcompass@vcu.edu](mailto:libcompass@vcu.edu).

W4



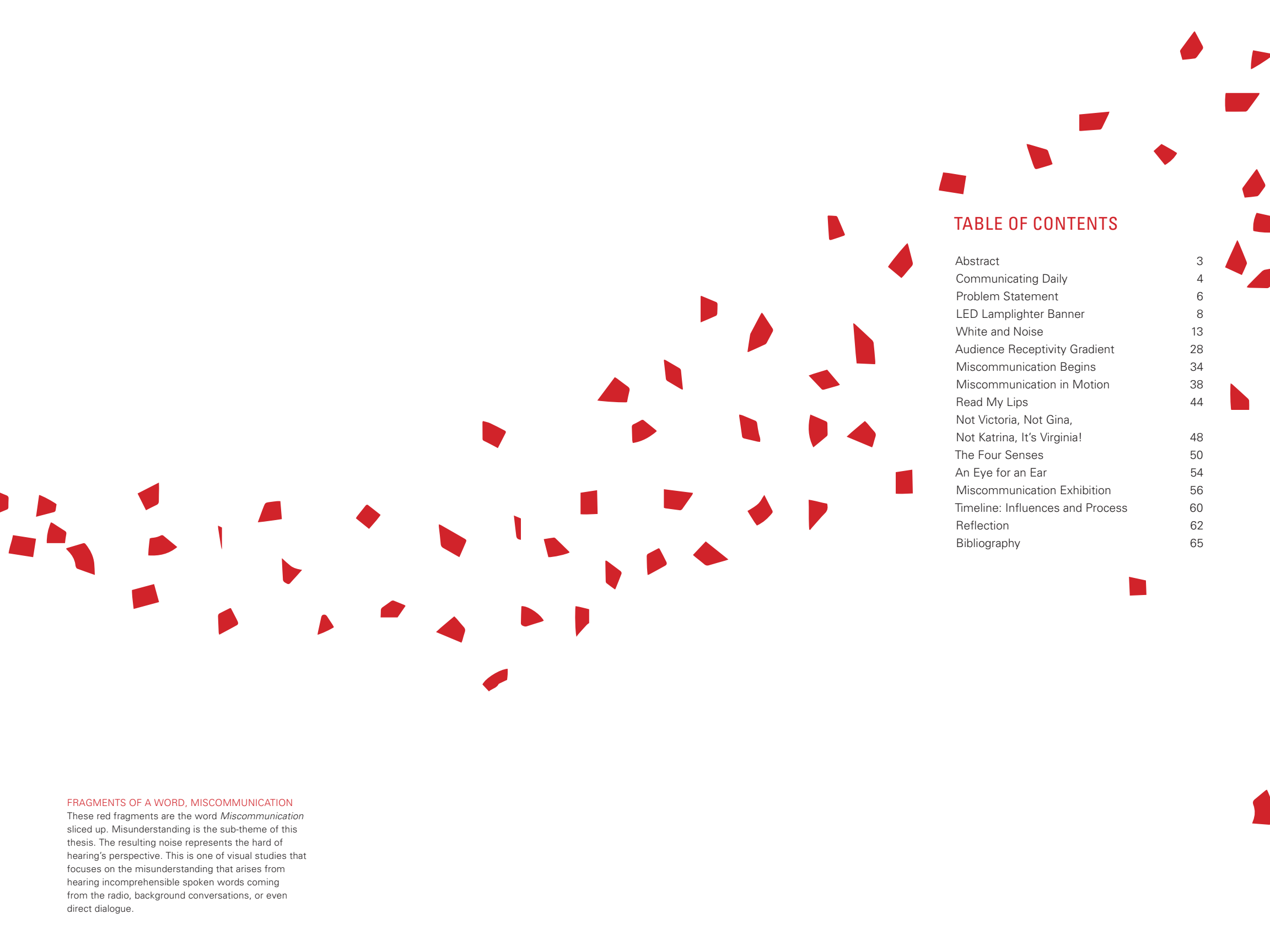




WHAT?: Visual Interpretations of  
the Miscommunication Between  
the Hearing and Deaf

VIRGINIA SHOU 2013  
MFA DESIGN / VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS  
VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	3
Communicating Daily	4
Problem Statement	6
LED Lamplighter Banner	8
White and Noise	13
Audience Receptivity Gradient	28
Miscommunication Begins	34
Miscommunication in Motion	38
Read My Lips	44
Not Victoria, Not Gina, Not Katrina, It's Virginia!	48
The Four Senses	50
An Eye for an Ear	54
Miscommunication Exhibition	56
Timeline: Influences and Process	60
Reflection	62
Bibliography	65

### FRAGMENTS OF A WORD, MISCOMMUNICATION

These red fragments are the word *Miscommunication* sliced up. Misunderstanding is the sub-theme of this thesis. The resulting noise represents the hard of hearing's perspective. This is one of visual studies that focuses on the misunderstanding that arises from hearing incomprehensible spoken words coming from the radio, background conversations, or even direct dialogue.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis visualizes the communication challenges both latent and obvious of my daily life as a hard of hearing individual. By focusing on a variety of experiences and examples I demonstrate the implications of a hard of hearing individual's life. The prints, objects and videos that I have created for my visual thesis aim to enrich the understanding of a broader public on issues regularly faced by Deaf people. At the heart of my work my goal is to generate mutual empathy between the hearing and the Deaf.



## COMMUNICATING DAILY

When I am introduced to a new person, he or she often assumes I am from another country due to my *Deaf voice*. My deafness is a result of damage to my auditory nerve caused by staph-pneumonia at the age of 18 months. My Chinese parents raised me like a normal hearing child. They chose an oral method, a doctrine of Deaf education that emphasizes speech development and lip reading in lieu of American Sign Language also known as Manualism. Since my parents desperately wanted to restore my hearing, they invested in cochlear implant surgery which enabled me to hear better. The device signals an internal processor to activate electrodes stimulating auditory nerves. This increased my ability from a 30 db range I could hear with hearing aids to a hearing ranging from 5db to 10db. Through years of hard work in speech therapy that continues to this day, I have been able to mainstream into the hearing world.

As a side note, I am technically Deaf, but label myself as hard of hearing because I have merged into the hearing world. I will interchangeably use the word Deaf and hard of hearing going forward.

In response to my passable speech, hearing individuals often underestimate the amount of effort that goes into deciphering daily communication. I manage to understand by listening and lipreading. If I don't, I ask people to repeat themselves. I've grown accustomed to this process so working to gain clarification comes naturally. So naturally, in fact, my friends and colleagues in the hearing

world often forget that this daily challenge of understanding the spoken word does indeed take intentional effort.

Before attending VCU for the visual communication graduate program, I worked at the prestigious architectural firm, Perkins Eastman, in New York City. I feel my experience was a success; however, efforts had to be made in order to educate my colleagues in how best to communicate, i.e., eye contact, lipreading and certain gestures designed to attract my attention. They quickly adapted, perhaps because New York City is a diverse city that demands myriad adjustments from its citizens. When I first entered this graduate program, I assumed my classmates would quickly adapt as well.

What I discovered instead was a shockingly difficult experience. It was challenging to establish clear conversational relationships with my classmates during first year. Due to a series of miscommunications and unclear expectations of my abilities and needs, conflict and discord steadily increased. Since I spoke well, it was assumed that I heard well enough too, and my classmates did not understand why interpreters were needed.

After relaying this experience to my Deaf peers, I discovered they also face similar situations in the hearing world.

The obstacles I encountered were overwhelming. As much as I wanted to explore other interests in the Visual Communication field, I

spent so much time educating my peers about Deafness, that it became a major theme in my artwork. As a consequence, my emotions manifested into an array of visual studies. I started by demonstrating my observations on miscommunication in an abstract, poetic way, which conveyed the experience of frustrating fractured communication but did not increase awareness effectively. However, I felt it was a necessary process as I approached hearing, listening and misunderstanding as a subject.

A turning point in the final phase of the process was when I learned about the Audience Receptivity Gradient, developed by social media scientist, David Rose. The gradient is a guide for understanding where an audience stands with issues. His work gave me a clearer picture and helped change my design strategies for educating my peers. This final discovery and shift toward advocacy became the core of my thesis as I will demonstrate my experience in perceiving auditorily and visually through my creative work.

### ZIG ZAG STRIPS

The strips in incoherent order make a word illegible.  
*Ink on translucent paper.*



## PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to the National Association for the Deaf, there are 32 million deaf and hard of hearing people in the United States, ranging from those who have profound to mild hearing loss. Within this population, experiences can vary widely depending on when the individual loses their hearing—at a young age, during their teens, in adulthood, or at an advanced age. There are different modes of communication: some use spoken language, others use sign language and others use different forms of communication.

Within this population, with a range of hearing loss with different preferences in using communication, there is a portion of the Deaf community that has its own culture, beliefs, value and language. The letter *d* for the word deaf becomes capitalized *D*. The lower case *d* is used for medical diagnosis for those with hearing loss. I will be referencing the word throughout this thesis in a non-medical sense.

The graphic design printed materials I found were Deaf Awareness Week posters. They represent three different kinds of Deaf people.

1. The two kids in the *Look at Me* poster are Deaf from young age, and they appear happy and contented with their deafness. They only exist in the Deaf community. What would the poster look like if they mainstream in the hearing world?

2. The one with an older woman in the *Identity* poster is the one who loses her sight and hearing in later life, and the poster shows that it's common to lose your hearing and keep your identity at the same time. This poster does not reveal the inevitable consequence:

the impact on mental health and struggle of not being able to understand what they used to hear.

3. The typographical poster *SHOUT DOESN'T MAKE HEARING EASIER* demonstrates that volume does not make any difference. What is equally as ineffective as increasing the volume is when someone talks too close to me. The poster creates the assumption that every Deaf person can lipread, when, for example, I cannot lipread without my cochlear implant.

While the posters effectively advocate identity and anti-discrimination within the Deaf community, they were only shown during Deaf Awareness week, and the results were superficial and ineffective as the posters were designed for one-way conversation.

Within a Deaf community, Deaf people experience greater empathy and acceptance. Within a hearing community, Deaf people feel there is an expectation to communicate like a hearing person. There isn't a sense that the hearing embrace a person's deafness.

The efforts through these posters should go deeper and be more specific. They should point out how obstacles to understanding impact on a social level, depending on the type of deafness.

Even though deafness is accommodated to some extent, there remains a lack of awareness of specific needs as there are many different types of Deaf people. The Deaf also encounter different types of people with (1) both the willingness and the understanding, (2) neither the willingness nor the understand-

ing, and (3) willingness but a lack of understanding. Some don't understand because they were never exposed to the Deaf, and sometimes they won't even try to comply.

In one scenario one would assume people can accommodate the Deaf, but they are probably unaware of different preferences. If my disability service had been able to understand that I cannot take notes and watch an interpreter simultaneously, they would have been more likely to approve my request for a notetaker in addition to having my interpreters. This is a good example that shows the complexity of the Deaf experience.

One of my works shown later in this thesis, titled *Miscommunication*, demonstrates the hard of hearing's experience in perceiving the spoken word, mistaking one word for another. This is an example that shows some of the practical everyday challenges hidden in a Deaf life.

My work represents the daily struggle to communicate within the hearing world and to show the disadvantages Deaf people face in dealing with the lack of understanding hearing people have about Deafness and Deaf culture. My experimental visual works, my typography-based studies and language-based videos, are inspired by my own struggle as a Deaf individual. I want to show a broader audience the ordeals, mishaps and confusion I regularly face in daily life.



**LOOK AT ME** Design agency unknown, UK Council on Deafness, 2010. **LOSING YOUR SIGHT AND SOUND** Design agency unknown, Helen Keller National Center, 2011. **SHOUT DOESN'T MAKE HEARING EASIER** DDB Group Auckland, the National Foundation for the Deaf, New Zealand, 2009.



## LED LAMPLIGHTER BANNER

My underlying theme started with inspiration from the Lamplighter cafe and a nearby bridge in Richmond. As much as I enjoy taking a break and getting together with my friends, I saw a parallel between the cafe and bridge: the cafe brings people together, and the bridge connects two different places. Connection in public space became a theme. I proposed a radio-driven LED banner along a main street in Richmond as an ideal use of technology. This would enable both hearing and Deaf instant access to audio-sourced text broadcasts from a local Richmond community radio station, WRIR. This textual access, similar to television's closed captioning, would be treated on equal terms for both parties. This was one of my early studies and efforts in challenging existing technology available for the Deaf. However, seeing how the banner will benefit the entire community, people may not be aware that this project was created for accessibility for the Deaf and hard of hearing.



### RIBBONS AS BANNERS

Close up shot of ribbons as banners with texts.  
Pins with transferred inks on Colored Canvas Ribbon  
Ink on paper.



### RIBBONS AS BANNERS

Studies of visualizing banners across the map of Richmond.  
Pins with transferred inks on Colored Canvas Ribbon  
Ink on paper.





#### BANNER ON LEIGH STREET

An image of a street with LED display banner.  
Laser printing on paper.

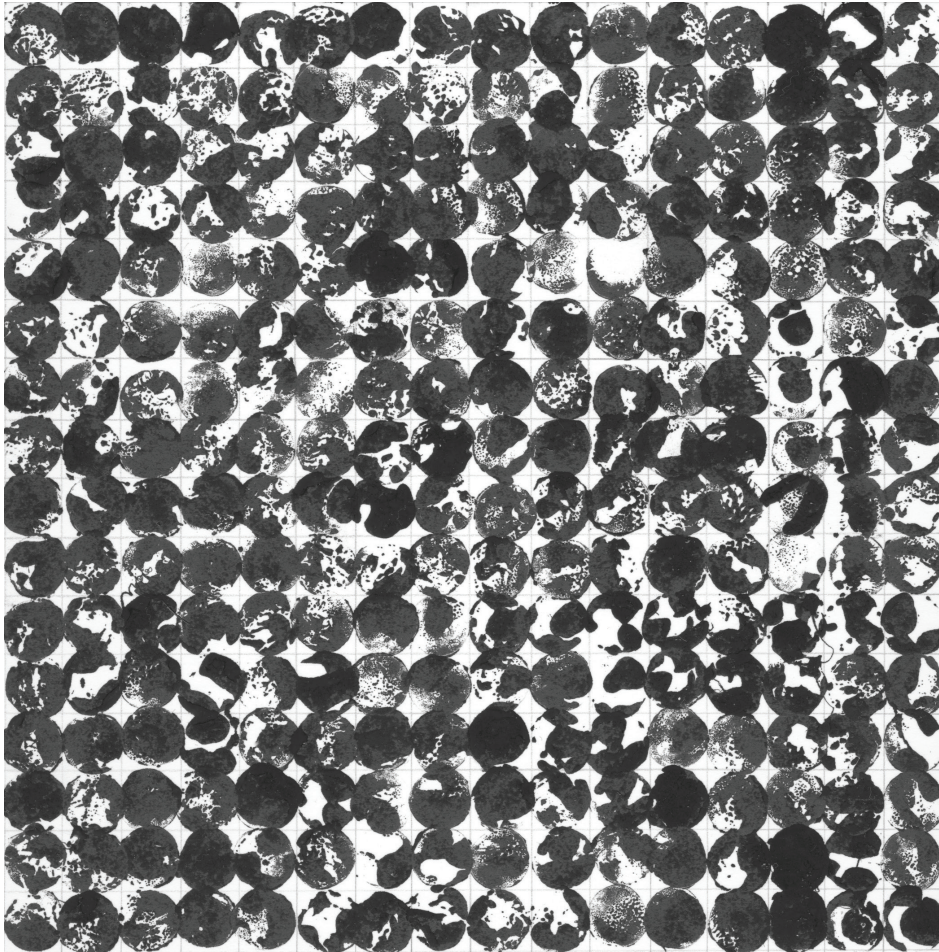


to take over yo

#### LED BANNER IN POLLAK BUILDING

Displayed during Open Nite. 14 inches by 200 feet,  
crayola ink print on paper.





#### NAIL STAMPING

The noise created by stamping the head of nail with ink, as part of a study in repurposing the use of a nail. The irregular circles appear in a grid and resemble the emission of static. The more solid the circle is, the more recognizable the sound is. Nail, screen printing ink on a paper. Nail, screen printing ink on a paper.

## WHITE AND NOISE

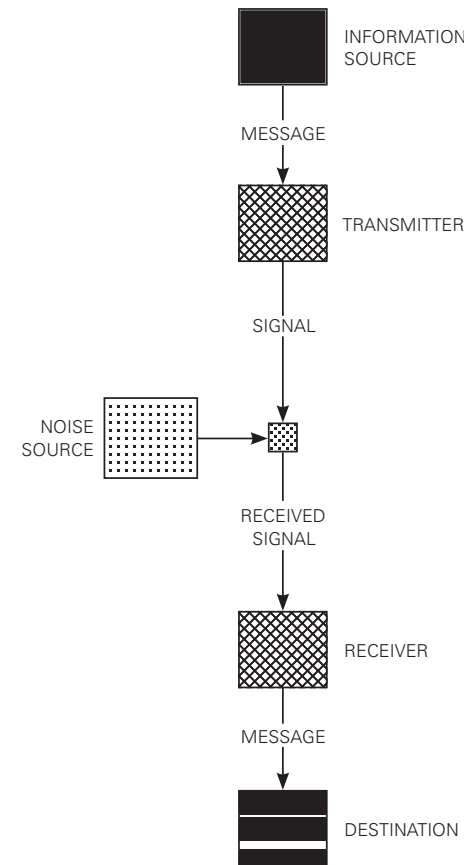
My focus became clearer when I picked up Kenya Hara's book *White*. It examines the concept of white. To him, white represents emptiness and at the same time pure potential—a vessel of life. His examination of emptiness and paper spoke directly to my own natural experience of silence. To me, his empty and blank paper represents silence, while paper filled with color marks represents noise with context. He stated white is powerful in the way it relates visual representations, sound and experience. The word white, void of color, is parallel to silence without noise.

When a cochlear implant is turned on, noise appears from silence. This process is similar to Shannon and Weaver's classic model of communication theory. It describes the process of creating noise as unwanted sound between information source and the destination. The noise is produced aurally or visually when the information is processed through telephone, radio or television.

*Sound is what we hear with our ears and it has meaning! Noise is unwanted sound or sound without meaning! – Julia Ionides and Peter Howell*

Sound is not experienced the same way by everyone. Sounds with no meaning or context are defined as *noise*. Birds chirping, doors slamming and footsteps are considered *sounds* because they are recognizable to me.

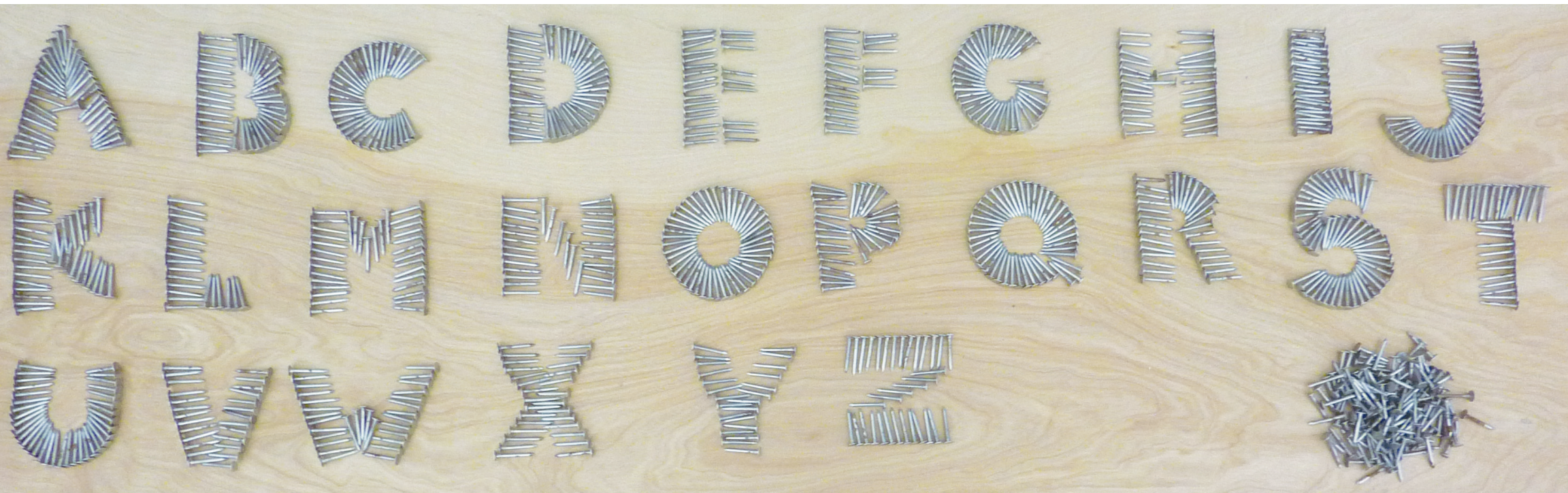
This idea of noise prompted my investigation in visualizing distortions through what the hard of hearing perceive as auditory distortion and omissions through hearing aids.



#### COMMUNICATION THEORY

My interpretation in sound using Shannon and Weaver's communication theory.

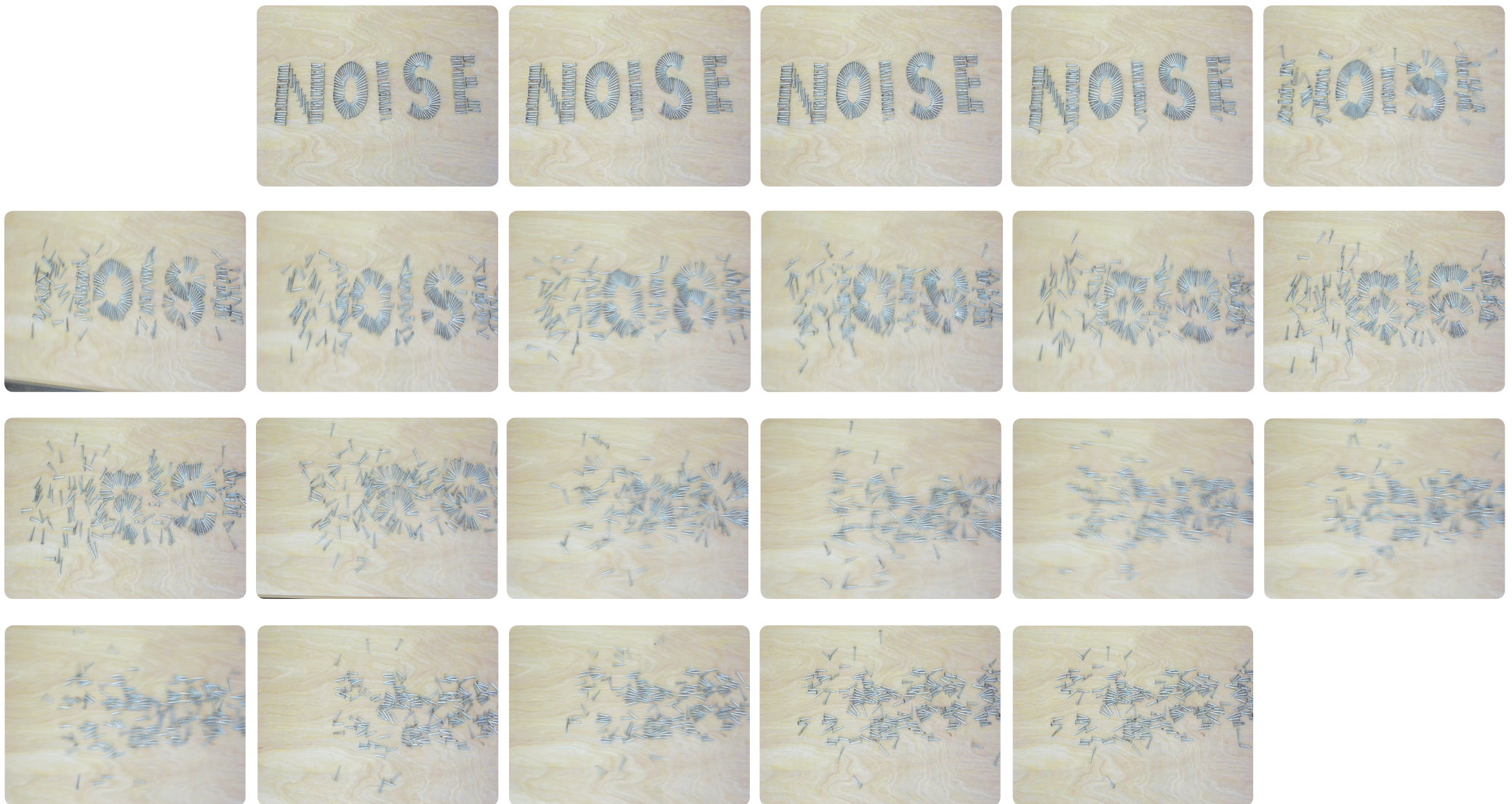




#### NAILS IN TYPE

Each nail represents bytes of sound. The nails are formed into clearer typography. *Nails on studio table.*





#### SHAKING THE NAILS

When the supporting table is shaken, the letterforms disperse, and become illegible to the viewers, representing the intangibility of sound. *Nails on studio table.*

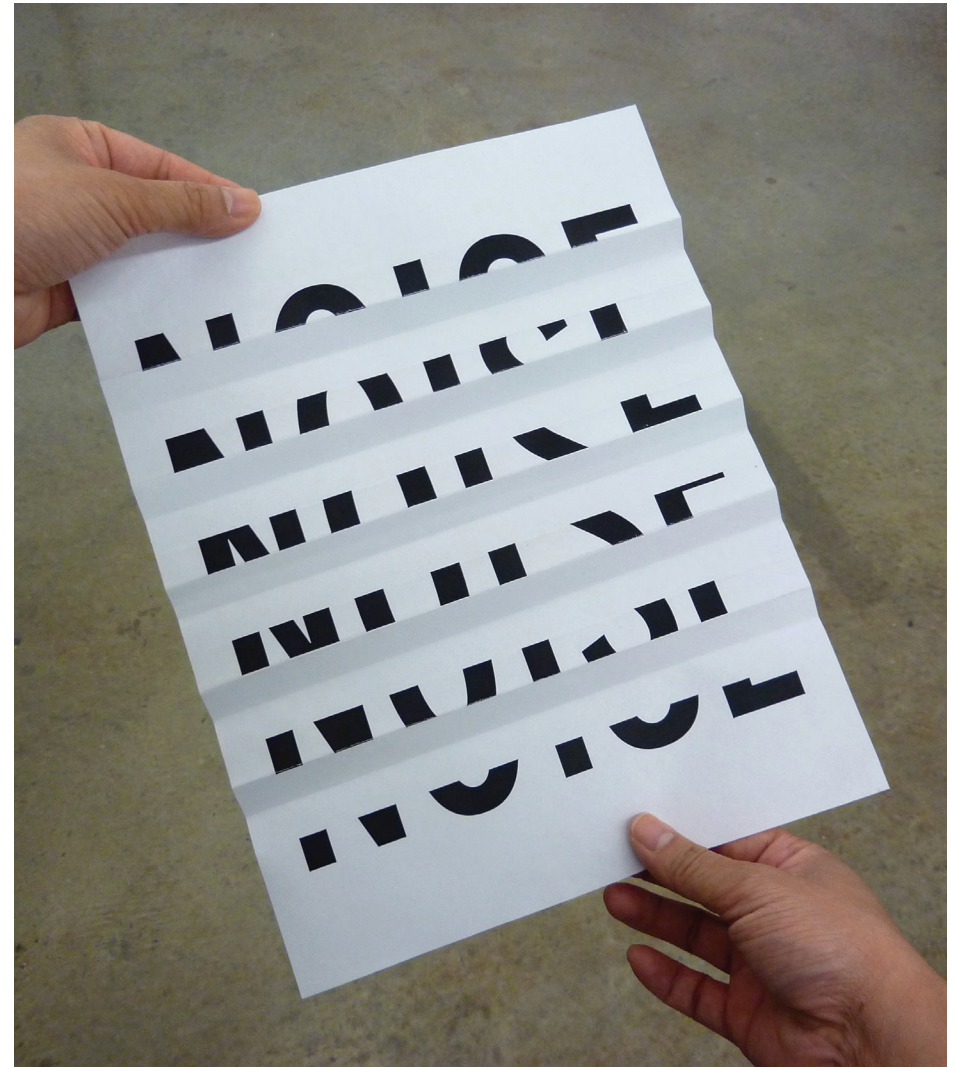




#### WORD OVER WORD

Overlapping words make letters recognizable and unrecognizable at the same time. *Laser printing on transparent paper.*





#### PULLED WORD

The type deconstructs when lipreading is not possible.  
*Ink on plain paper.*

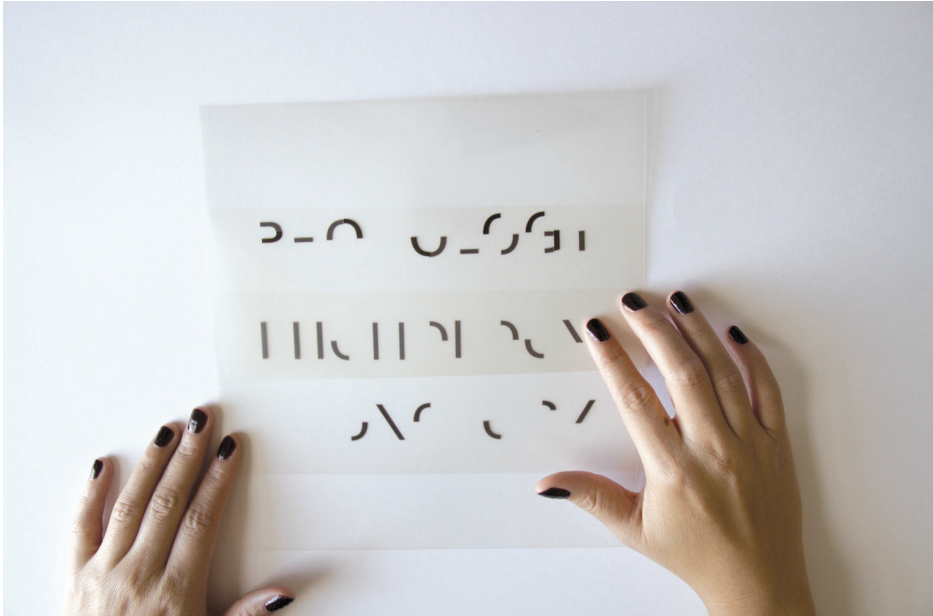




#### CUT OUT AND UNFOLDED

Similar to the pulled example, a word was cut on folded paper, and it is unfolded revealing unrecognizable, yet recognizable typographical parts. *Laser cut on translucent paper.*





#### STRAIGHT UP TYPE BITS

Incoherent type bits become legible when the word is finally understood. *Laser printing on transparent paper.*



#### JUMBLED TYPE BITS

Instead of giving the user easy access, one has to piece letterform fragments into words by overlaying transparent paper. *Laser printing on transparent paper.*







## DAVID ROSE'S AUDIENCE RECEPTIVITY GRADIENT

*My early studies simply demonstrated my visual interpretations. I felt the effort did not have enough impact and it was time to take the audience to another level. How do I inspire awareness, or even action? My workshop, led by a North Carolina State University graduate, introduced me to David Rose's unpublished work, Audience Receptivity Gradient. This essay is based on my understanding and interpretation of the gradient as it helps to design the rest of my studies so they would be more effective with viewers.*

Depending on the cause, public awareness campaigns have different functions. They can reveal a situation unknown to the public. They can provide information about a known problem. They can argue a stance on a controversial topic. Or they can incite people to act. One of the purposes in campaigning is to educate people. With more facts, an audience may change their attitude and work toward a greater cause. Enlisting people to a cause requires consideration of an audience's mindset. Without this, the message may not provoke the right response.

David Rose's audience receptivity gradient is a useful tool for designers in measuring an audience's level of understanding of and empathy for a particular topic. The model categorizes audiences into five different groups: not ready to know, ready to know, ready to hold an opinion, ready to act and ready to advocate. Knowing where the audience stands can help to a framework that influences communication strategy. Designers can encourage and challenge their audience to take the next step or two.

In addition to our practice in researching and gaining knowledge for designing campaigns, this gradient can help designers know where the audience stands so we can redefine and determine their framework. Humor, shock and confusion are examples of emotional elements that can be used in design. The audience would be challenged and considered before taking the next step or two. Various examples over the next few pages demonstrate how Rose's Audience Receptivity Gradient works.



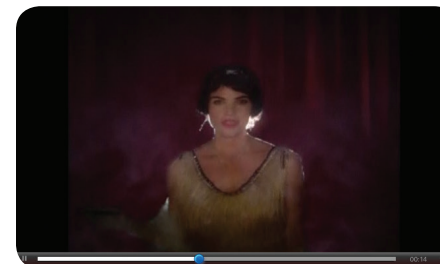
### DAVID ROSE'S AUDIENCE RECEPTIVITY GRADIENT

*Not ready to know*



In this category, an audience may not be ready to acknowledge a problem or issue. This could be because they are either ignorant, prejudiced or not willing to listen or consider any detailed facts or opinions. The subject may be too far outside of their experience, as might be the case in controversies surrounding sweatshops, whaling, the fur trade, etc. Or, the issues may address highly personal questions involving religion, race or politics.

This PSA, *The Icons*, by Tobacco Free California, was shown in movie theaters. This commercial kicks off with the iconic camel from Camel cigarettes. Then, it morphs into other figures: a tough cowboy, a bad ass rapper and a glamorous flapper. Ultimately at the end, it reveals an old, sick man hooked up to an oxygen tank. This commercial visualizes the shocking reality of cigarette smoking. The cool iconic figures are understood to end up like this dying, sick man. The audience may already be aware that smoking is bad, but this ad shows the consequence if you continue smoking and educates those who are in denial and *not ready to know*. The audience can either disregard the message or take the next step to find out more information on how to quit smoking.



Still frames from *The Icons*, 2006

The scene transforms as one iconic cigarette figure morphs into another figure about seven times, revealing the truth at the end. <http://www.tobaccofreeca.com/ads/tv/>

### Ready to know



In some cases audiences may be ready to learn more information about certain issues. They are aware that issues exist, but need to know where and how to find out more. They may be ready to take time to look up other people's opinions and the pros and cons of their argument. PSAs in this category often display information at the end of commercials telling people whom they can call or where they can find a brochure or a website for more information.

The Girl Effect campaign spreads awareness in changing a girl's life for the better in a third world country. Their website starts with a short video presenting a consequence of a poor girl in the third world if there is no support. It also shows positive things that happen in a girl's life when you donate money. This animation addresses an audience that is *not ready to know*. For those, *ready to know*, the website provides an option to navigate for more information.



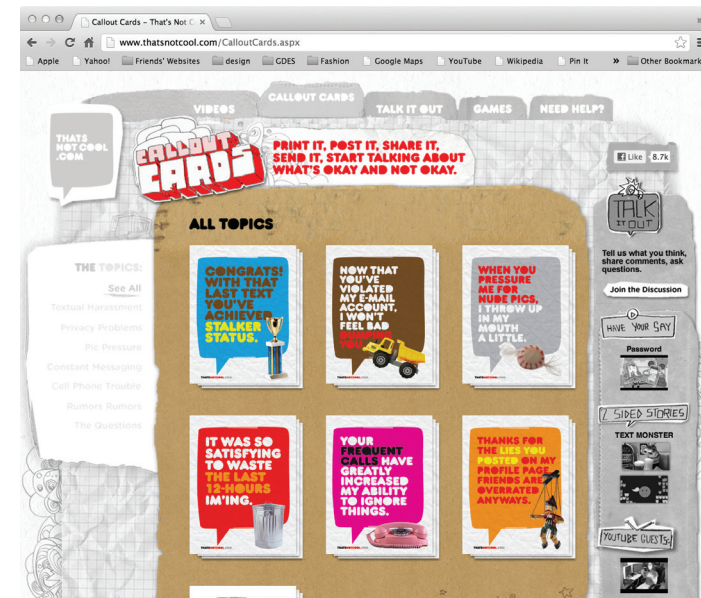
Girl Effect Campaign Homepage  
The site appears after the splash page ends, making more information available for the users.  
[www.girleffect.org](http://www.girleffect.org)

### Ready to hold an opinion



After researching, learning more facts and comparing the pros and cons, an audience may be ready to actually hold an opinion. In most of the advocacy and awareness websites such as [komen.org](http://komen.org), [standuptocancer.org](http://standuptocancer.org), or [livestrong.org](http://livestrong.org), they offer a platform for people to participate in discussion or post their comments. Their comments, relating to the issue, could help inform other's opinions as well.

The website below, That's Not Cool ([thatsnotcool.com](http://thatsnotcool.com)), was created by Futures Without Violence. It targets teenagers' issues: controlling, disrespecting or pressuring friends and colleagues within mobile media, instant messaging, and online accounts. The website addresses audiences represented in most sections of Rose's Gradient. It provides video clips for those who are *not ready to know*, more information for someone *ready to know* and some platforms for those who are *ready to hold an opinion* to post a comment.



Callout Card Section for THAT'S NOT COOL  
This page allows the user to pick and send one of the cards.  
<http://www.thatsnotcool.com>



### Ready to act



Some audiences may already hold an opinion about the facts surrounding an issue. They may be eager to contribute opinions or show support. They know they want to be involved, but may not be sure how to do so effectively. They need ideas or a particular method to demonstrate their involvement. The solution can be as simple as showing support by wearing red ribbons for AIDS or pink ribbons for Breast Cancer.

Again for the *That's Not Cool* website, there is a page that is specifically for those *ready to act*. It provides *callout* cards that directly address the following issues: Textual Harassment, Privacy Problems, Pic Pressure, Constant Messaging, Cell Phone Trouble, Rumors and Stalking. The site offers teenagers opportunities to print, post, share or send a card that says when something is and is not OK. They can also send a card directly to someone who is bothering them.



#### "Talk It Out" THAT'S NOT COOL

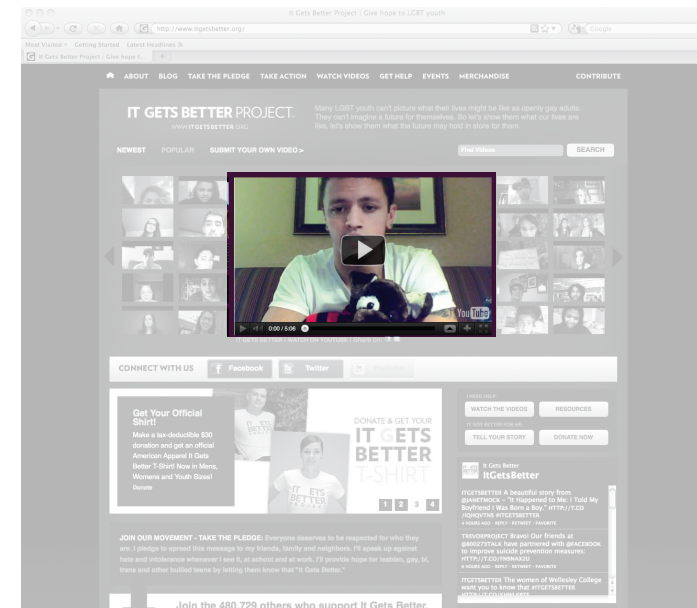
The users can post comments and discuss matters relating to the card shown.  
<http://www.thatshotcool.com>

### Ready to advocate



Audiences may be ready to share information and actively enlist others to participate. They may take up responsibility to raise money or create a platform for others to join the cause.

A good example is the anti-bully video campaign, *It Gets Better Project*, promoted by gay activist Dan Savage. It was created in response to a series of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community (LGBT) teen suicides caused by bullying. In the video, he empathizes what it feels like to be bullied through high school, and he shares stories of when his life got better after high school. His website inspires many people, including celebrities, and encourages participation through submission of videos and by spreading the message, "It gets better."



#### It Gets Better Project

The site is an open platform, inspiring others to advocate by posting their own video.  
[www.itgetsbetter.org](http://www.itgetsbetter.org)

## MISCOMMUNICATION BEGINS

After learning more about David Rose's Audience Receptivity Gradient I felt that my earlier studies were muddled in *not ready to know*, but the contexts were not provocative enough to move the audience to the next step. I had to be more involved in analyzing the audience. Communication comes in different forms, mainly reading, writing, speaking and listening. When it comes to talking, my eyes are focused on lipreading.

*When communication occurs between two people, the receiver automatically recognizes principal elements of a message....sets, isolates, and patterns. The sets (words) are what you perceive first, the isolates (sounds) are the components that make up the sets, while the patterns (syntax) are the way in which sets are strung together in order to give them something. — Edward T. Hall*

Verbal communication between two people is a complicated process. Hearing people generally rely on sounds for cues, but many Deaf must rely on eye contact and lipreading for communication. 33% of sounds are visible through lip movements. The rest are invisible. In most scenarios we have to make an educated guess to fill in the blank. Lipreading takes training. Learning to lipread is similar to learning typography. It takes art and skill to read properly. The corners of lips are important cues, similar to the details of a letterform. The medium of lipreading is fluid, temporal and intangible—not permanent, unlike print, which becomes static, on paper. Printed text is solid compared to a movable mouth—an ephemeral moment.

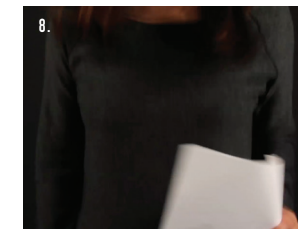
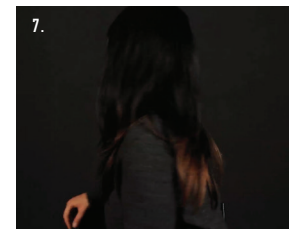
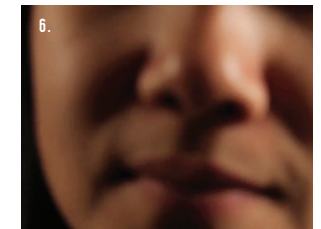
As an example of how communication difficulty affects my everyday life, I was having a conversation with a professor. My attention is always undivided, and I focus on lipreading and sound for cues. I was holding a wallet when she said, *Monday is good*. I was perplexed by this comment, and I was thinking it would be insane for someone to love Monday as it is the first day of the work week. Who loves Monday? So, I repeated what she said. She got confused and corrected me, *Oh no, I mean money is good*. The lips move the same way when *Monday* and *money* are pronounced.

As a Deaf individual, I generally depend on listening, eye contact, lipreading and facial expression to communicate. What about the other way around? There is no existing data on what hearing people understand when communicating with Deaf or hard of hearing.

Based on my experience repeating a sentence after what my audiologist said with her mouth covered during hearing tests, I created an experiment for hearing people. The experiment was a test to see how many words can be misunderstood. I compiled ten random sentences, and each sentence has a specific action as a part of a distraction—cover mouth, look sideways, jump up and down, etc. Their answers reveal some words are wrong. The poster on page 36 demonstrates the bigger picture.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE SPEAKER:  
EACH SENTENCE MUST BE SAID ONCE. DO NOT REPEAT.

1. (DIRECT EYE CONTACT): "THE CHAIR IS FURIOUS."
2. (FACING DIRECTLY AT THE PERSON, BUT YOUR EYES LOOK SIDEWAY): "THE SUCCESS SMELLS GOOD."
3. (CLOSED EYES): "THERE IS A NICE PIE AND COFFEE SHOP IN SOUTHSIDE."
4. (WITH EYE CONTACT & COVER MOUTH): "WHY CAN'T WE IMAGINE GREY-HOT?"
5. (TALK SIDWAYS): "YOU HAVE TO BE AN NRA MEMBER IN ORDER TO JOIN A GUN CLUB."
6. (TALK TOO CLOSE): "WE OFTEN SPEAK WHITE AS NOT COLORED. WHY?"
7. (FACING BACK/OPPOSITE OF THE LISTENER): "THE SUN IS A THIEF."
8. (JUMP AS YOU TALK): "I CONFESS I DO NOT BELIEVE IN TIME."
9. (SWIRL AROUND): "CULTURE IS SATURATED WITH BOTH EMOTION AND INTELLIGENCE."
10. (COMPLETELY COVER YOUR FACE): "EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON THE WIND."



### THE SCRIPT AND THE SPEAKER

The speaker uses the script and demonstrates the action while speaking at the same time.

## MISUNDERSTANDINGS

[illegible]

## MISUNDERSTANDINGS

This is collected data, based on participants' answers. Red represents wrong words. When one steps back to see the whole poster, the red parts reveal how much people can misunderstand one word for another. *Ink on paper.*



## MISCOMMUNICATION IN MOTION: LOLITA

Inspired by the *Misunderstanding* poster, my series of film projects gave the audience an almost-live experience. I based the first project on the book, *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabakov. A friend dictated the original text and I scripted what I thought I heard. What I wrote was completely different from the original text. Then an actor read the written script out loud. The original text appears as subtitles and the viewers hear a spoken interpretation simultaneously.

When the viewers failed to realize the incongruities, they were only just listening or just reading the subtitles. It took a while before they realized that two words were not alike. However, this approach in spreading awareness was not effective because the book was not everyday subject matter, causing more confusion.

### SUBTITLES, CONTAINING ORIGINAL WORDS

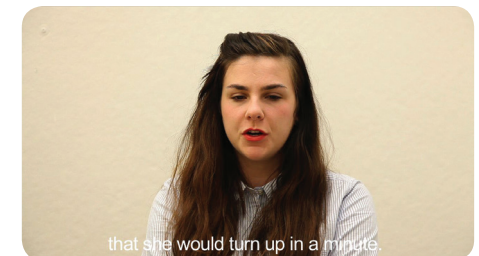
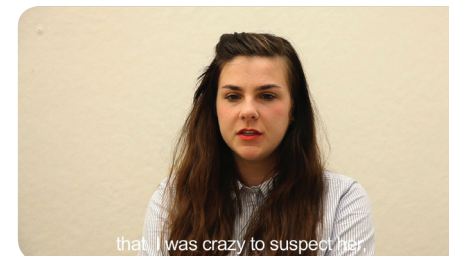
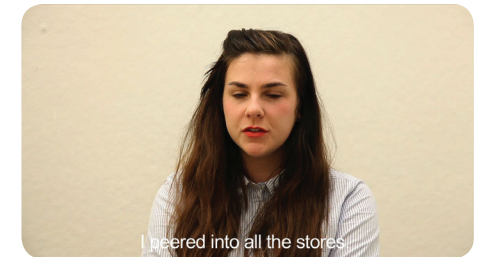
The new and beautiful post office I had just **emerged** from stood between a **dormant** movie house and a conspiracy of poplars. The time was 9 a.m. mountain time. The street was **Main Street**. I **pace** its blue **side peering** at the opposite one: charming **it** into beauty, was one of those fragile young summer **mornings** with flashes of glass here and there and a general **air** of faltering and almost fainting at the prospect of an intolerably **torrid noon**. Crossing over, I loafed and **leafed, as it were**, through one long **lock**: Drugs, Real Estate, Fashions, Auto parts, Cafe, Sporting Goods, Real Estate, Furniture, Appliances, Western Union Cleaners, Grocery. Officer, Office **my daughter** has run away. In **collusion** with a detective; in love with a black mailer. Took advantage of my **utter helpless-ness**. I **peered** into all the stores. I deliberated **only if I should** talk to any of the **sparse** foot-passengers. I did not. I sat for a while in the parked car. I **inspected** the public **garden** on the east side. I went back to Fashions and Auto Parts. I told myself with a **burst** of furious sarcasm - **un ricanement** - that I was crazy to **suspect** her, that she would turn up in **a** minute. She did"

### ORIGINAL TEXT AND SCRIPTED WITH WRONG WORDS

The red text from the original and the script correlates with each other as they show which one is mistaken for another word.

### SCRIPTED, CONTAINING WRONG WORDS

The new and beautiful post office I \_\_\_\_\_ just **submerged** from stood between **doorman** house and a conspiracy of **populous**. The time was 9 a.m. mountain time. The street was **mangled**. I **painting** its blue **sky** at the opposite one: charming into beauty, was one of those fragile young summer **moaning** with flashes of glasses here and there and a general **hair** of faltering and almost fainting at the prospect of an **intolerable color** noon. Crossing over, I loafed and **cleaned everyone** through one long **block**: Drugs, Real Estate, Fashions, Auto Parts, Cafe, Sporting Goods, Real Estate, Furniture, Appliances, Western Union, Cleaners, Grocery. Officer, Officer, **MacDonald** has ran away. In **illusion** with a detective; in love with a black mailer. Took advantage of **other complexness**. **Appears** into all stores. I deliberated **in a fashion** talk to any of **sponge** foot passengers. I did not. I sat for a while in the parked car. I **expected** the public **audience** on the east side. I went back to Fashions and Auto parts. I told myself with a **bird** furious sarcasm - Une was on a monk- that I was to **dispatch** her, that she would turn up in **any** minute. She did."



### LOLITA

The narrator subtly says the wrong word.  
1:29, original video.



#### WHY NYC TAXI DRIVER HONK

My second attempt at film used the radio as subject matter. People discuss what is heard from the radio as part of our daily life. In this piece, the incongruities still appear. 1:31, original video.



## MISCOMMUNICATION IN MOTION: 30 SECOND PSA

Resulting from the first and second films this 30 second Public Service Announcement style film is an ultra-condensed and simple version. The lens is focused on lips, pointing out a series of paired words that were accumulated from everyday conversations for this project. The hearing person says a word and the hard of hearing person would repeat what he or she thought was said. Of course, there were many inaccuracies. This experience is not limited to the hard of hearing—anyone can mistake one word for another.

During my process of creating still images for my documentation I paired up specific points where two consonants appear alike. The hearing person's lips would appear normal as my lips appear over enunciated. This project would have been easier if I used another hearing person instead of repeating the word myself. Also, this film might be even more powerful if there were either no sound or no subtitles, and this would challenge the audience on a deeper level when they become more aware of incongruities.



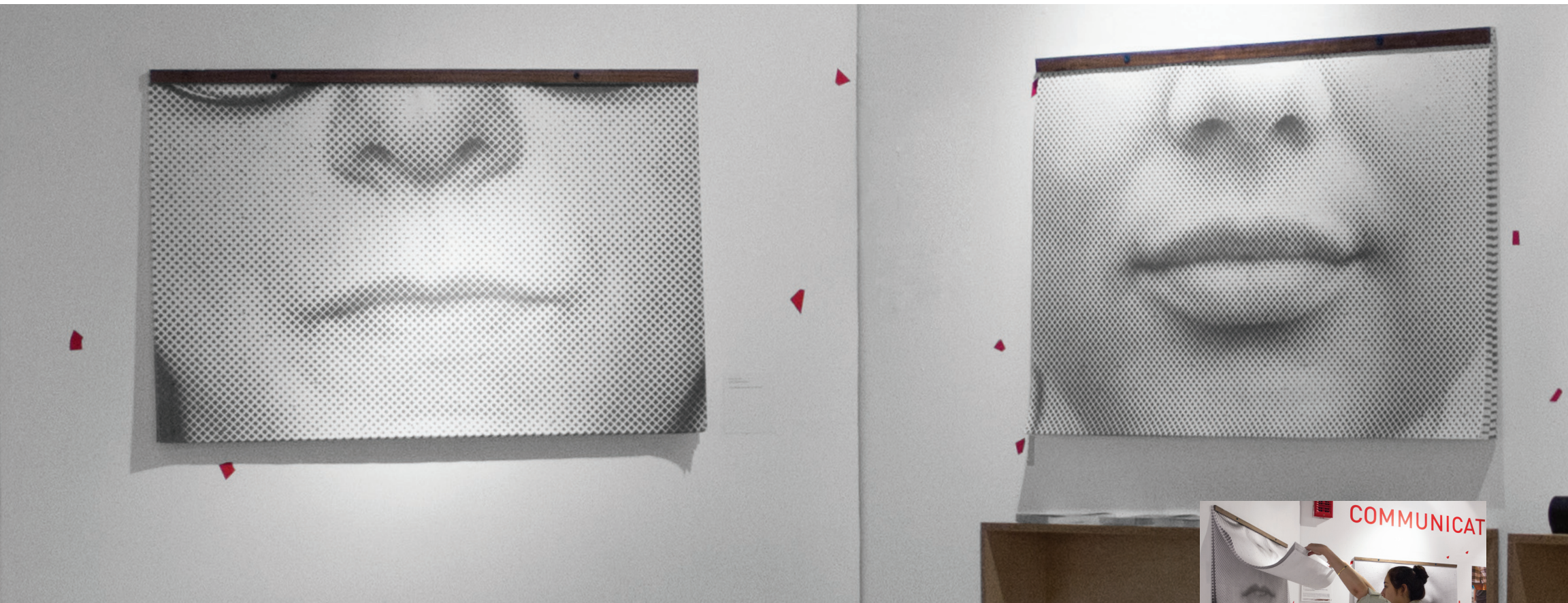
Three out of one thousand Americans  
are deaf and hard of hearing.

Lipreading looks alike.

### 30 SECOND PSA

From top to bottom on the left side, they said rabbit, smile and white. The right side repeats after the left one with different words, i.e. weapon for rabbit, smells for smile, and right for white. 0:30, original video.

As a step down from film to print, flipbooks continued to give the experience of lipreading. An oversized flipbook mimics the experience of failing to understand when someone talks too close to me. Small flipbooks were easy to control the speed of lip movement. After the user flipped it and could not figure it out they asked me, “what does it say?” I answered, “No, I’m not giving you the answer.” This gives the user the experience of not being able to access words. This brings the audience to a newer level—frustration.



#### POSTER SIZED FLIPBOOK

The two flipbooks are located adjacent to each other as if they are talking to each other. *Laser printing on architectural paper.*



**FLIPPING THE POSTER SIZED FLIP BOOK**  
Attempting to read the message by lipreading.





# FLIPBOOK IN MOTION

A view of a person flipping through a smaller book.  
*Ink on Paper.*

## NOT VICTORIA, NOT GINA, NOT KATRINA, IT'S VIRGINIA!

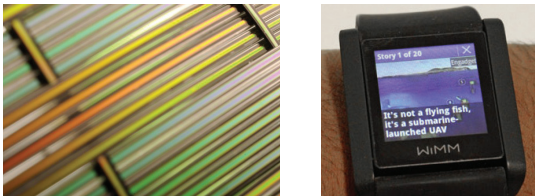
Whenever I tell people my name, they often mishear Victoria, Gina or Katrina. Even though my speech therapist forced me to pronounce *Virginia* about twenty to thirty times every session, I still mess it up because it's a combination of soft and hard sounds. So I begin to say my name by pronouncing the first part, starting with a "v" with short "i" and tongue tucking "r," then "gin" and last "ya." Do I sound right? Probably not.

What about having a tattoo? It might be an ideal solution to this problem. This might save time and reduce miscommunication. Generally, having a tattoo inked into your skin permanently is a radical decision. Instead of having a permanent tattoo, I came up with a temporary solution. I started with basic letters on a flesh toned, stretch fabric, enabling users to spell words. Unfortunately, printing on stretch fabric was not successful. The elasticity in the fabric does not behave the same way as skin. For example, when I tried to move my wrist to show the letters, from back to front, the position of the letters would not move. It was a difficult process so I explored other materials.

At first I created prototypes by using paper mache for bracelets, and I used a laser cutter to create stenciled typefaces. I made other possible variations by applying blackboard paints and using Post-Its for anyone to write and scribble on. Then, I explored options using other materials for a product that could be practical or valued like a piece of jewelry, metal piece if possible. The material closest to that was wood or acrylic. The acrylic was laser cut, and then heated in the oven in order to be molded into a bracelet shape. The wooden bracelet project was a collaboration with a furniture design student. Wood veneers were layered and molded into bracelets.

The bracelets appear as fashion accessories, but they also touch on my interest in aesthetics as a graphic designer. They aid in communication between two people. Although, using the bracelet is in the form of *ready to act* as it could be used to increase awareness in communicating without spoken words.

These analog bracelets are no match against existing technologies such as smart phones. My next step is to incorporate digital technology into my research by reaching out to external resources. The two potential resources are Wimm's newly created smartphone watch and MIT researchers' functional fibers that can detect and produce sound.



### FURTHER POSSIBLE COLLABORATION AND EXPLORATIONS WITH MIT AND WIMMS

The precedents set by MIT's functional fibers and WIMM's smartphone could be applied to my analog communication project by contacting them for possible collaboration.



### ANALOG COMMUNICATION BRACELETS

Laser cut type on wood veneer and clear acrylic sheet.  
Acrylic, layered wood veneer.



## THE FOUR SENSES

During the last semester of my graduate studies, I came across embroidery when I assisted in making custom-made graduation sashes. This project prompted me to design patches to promote awareness about the Deaf. I found a video about a Deaf woman, Patricia Resl, who traveled the world collecting sign language for the word, *Deaf*. She explains that most signs are portrayed in a medical sense or used with negative connotations. One sign was used to connote a cripple and another one signified something less than a human being. Her favorite sign was found in Nepal. With four fingers up and the ring finger down, each finger represents one sense, and the folded ring finger represents loss of hearing. This sign is encouraged to be viewed in a positive light, just like other signs for *I love you* and *peace*.

I appropriated the positive idea by using the same handshape showing four senses for a patch and creating a riddle on another patch. These brightly colored patches reinforce positive attitudes and catch the viewer's attention. Advocacy starts motion and awareness increases when a question becomes a discussion.



### NEPAL SIGN LANGUAGE FOR DEAF

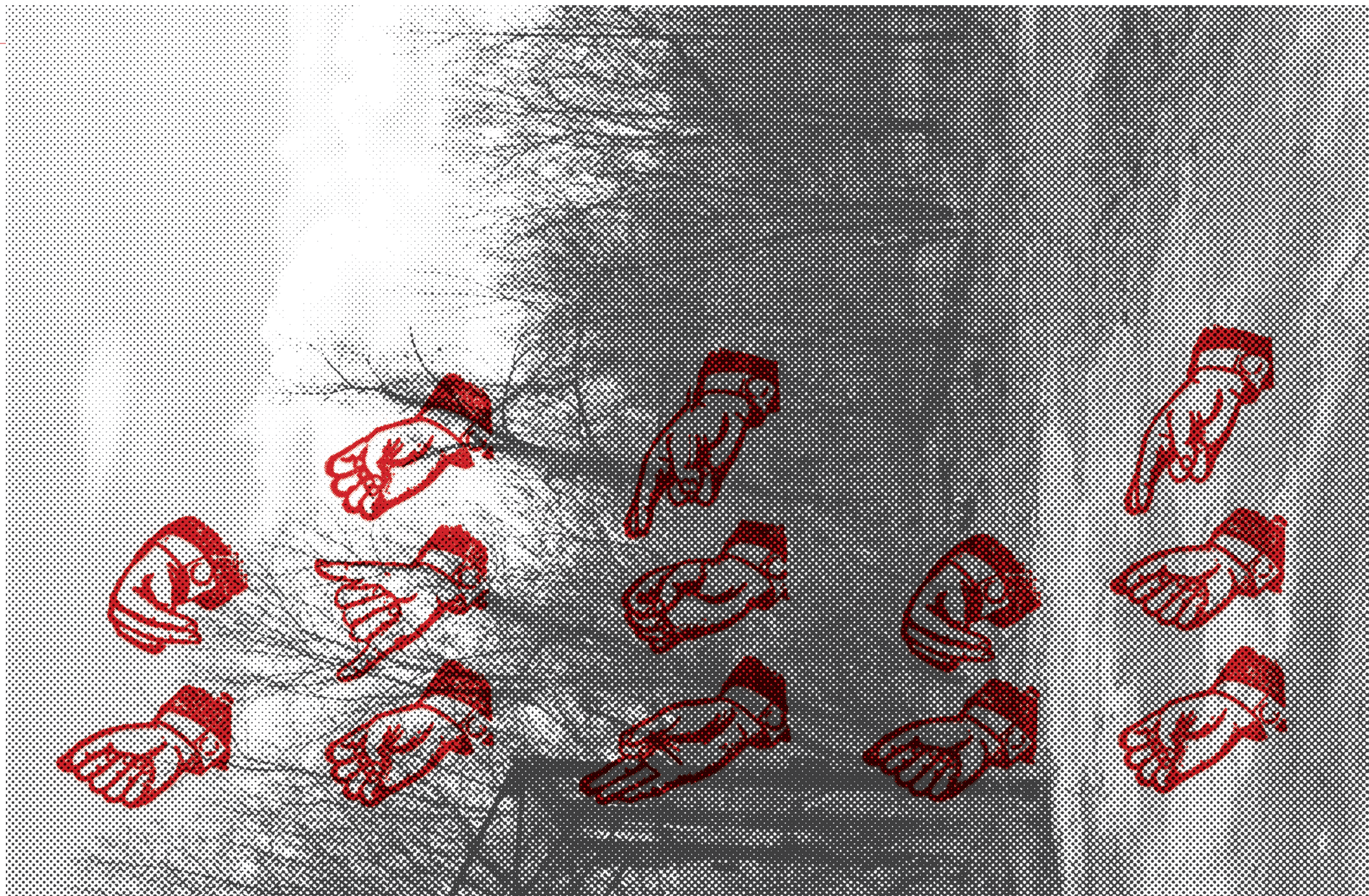
Patricia Resl demonstrates *Deaf* in Nepalese Sign Language. The image below is demonstrated in a similar, positive connotation in universal sign language, *I love you*.



### THE FOUR SENSES

The eye-catching patches appear positive and normal with a missing sense. Embroidered polyester thread.





#### AN EYE FOR AN EAR

Displaying a message in American Sign Language instead of traditional typeface challenges viewers to look up the translation. This poster is a visual response to my research on ASL as a technology—an extension of a voice. *Ink on Paper.*



## AN EYE FOR AN EAR

*This essay is relevant to visual communication, for hard of hearing, but it is solely based on American Sign Language in the Deaf community.*

*The poster from the previous page and this essay was inspired by reading Marshall McLuhan's general view on how Mass Media affects the decline of literacy in hearing society. However, as Mass Media relies on the visual, the implication is that the Deaf community will emerge as potential consumers of a new visual literacy.*

*Hands can speak to the eyes and the mind, what are they capable of saying? What sort of thoughts and feelings can they produce?*<sup>1</sup>

Unlike any other spoken language, American Sign Language (ASL) is a language used by the majority of Deaf people, and it can be learned by anyone. ASL is an extension of man's voice, and it is a human technology that is "spoken" by using hands, arms, facial expression and body language. Diane Brentari, ASL linguist, puts it: "Signs made using the arms and body in sign languages and those made using the tongue, velum, glottis, and palate in spoken languages are equivalent from the point of view of grammar."<sup>2</sup> ASL became an official language and has its own culture. It permits Deaf people to get together and support and understand each other better.

"The medium, as Marshall McLuhan noted, is not just the message, but the *message*."<sup>3</sup> English is like a "message" as ASL is a "message." English is a written and spoken language. ASL is neither; however, it is a visual, gestural language. Deaf people who use ASL are bilingual as they also can read and write English or another native language. The Deaf and ASL is not oral—literate continuum—with-in literate majority culture."<sup>4</sup>

In Marshall McLuhan's introduction to *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man*, he emphasized how technology in any medium can change literacy. Literacy does not only mean reading and writing—functions of the eye—it also includes listening. Learning language can be enriched by listening and understanding the context of a message; it is the same thing with ASL, but relies on the visual. McLuhan emphasized literacy as a foundation of communication and culture. His point of view focused on societies with spoken language. He did not consider the disabled or Deaf culture.

*In cultures like ours, long accustomed to splitting and dividing all things as a means of control, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, the medium is the message. This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by extension of ourselves, or by any new technology.*<sup>5</sup>

Before the Internet age, Deaf people were either clustered in a community or isolated from each other. In a community, they communicated with each other and supported each other socially, psychologically and politically. Deaf people, distanced from each other, had to write letters or had their parents talk on the phone for them. Technology for the Deaf was developing very slowly until the Internet and related digital technologies arrived. The most common technology for the Deaf before the Internet age was the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD). It was an electronic typewriter-like device that emitted beep-like, Morse code-like sound. It enabled the Deaf to communicate with each other, but did not allow for the use of their native language to fully communicate.

*Civilization gives the barbarian or tribal man an eye for an ear and is now at odds with the electric world...the terms barbarian or tribal man, civilization, electric world immediately evoke three different social constructs; they imply three different relationships between the individual and the environment, also denoting a different sensorial order.*<sup>6</sup>

ASL originated from French and follows the French grammar structure. Given this distinction as a unique language, ASL signers are in fact bilingual. They can write in the English language, and use ASL as their visual language. Therefore, the Deaf's "eye for an ear" is thriving well in "the electric world." Now with the Internet age, Marshall McLuhan would define us as a "global village." We have the ability for everyone in the world to communicate with each other instantaneously. Internet technology has opened many doors for the Deaf community. Video blogs are available for us to view. We are now able to see each other and communicate through web camera and through this web camera, we are able to utilize interpreter services for phone calls. In addition to Internet technology, we are able to view and post videos to spread information in our native language. We are able to comprehend the message fully without using texts. This technology surprisingly has not led to the deterioration of the usage of ASL. It has empowered our community politically, socially, and psychologically with a wealth of information.

For some however, technology for the Deaf is seen as a threat. Since the eighteenth century, the educators of the Deaf have been debating whether the Deaf child should be educated using an Oral or Manual approach. Manualism is a method of using sign language to educate Deaf students, and oralism is a method of using spoken language. Since 80% of Deaf children have hearing parents, oralism is

usually favored because the parents want their children to have the same experience as they do. Also, in the present day, cochlear implants are widely favored by hearing parents.

The cochlear implant has been a controversial issue since the 1990's. The cochlear implant (CI) is an advanced hearing aid technology that enables Deaf people to hear. The CI is an invasive technology: a device is surgically implanted in your head, near the cochlea. The device signals electrodes as sound stimulates auditory nerves. This is considered an advanced option instead of regular hearing aids. It is effective for people who became deaf at a late age—people who are accustomed to hearing culture. The idea of implanting such a device into Deaf children, has caused an uproar in the Deaf community. Cochlear implants are used to help children or adults fit into the hearing world. It is feared that this would lead to the demise of the Deaf community, as well as decrease ASL usage.

In conclusion, with a high note, I would like to end with James Paul Gee, "[It] sounds paradoxical to say so, but ASL [American Sign Language] exists in an 'oral' culture, a culture based on face-to-face signed interaction, with writing and middle class literacy playing little or no role in much of the heart of the community. Like many other such cultures, it has an active tradition of folklore and performance-centered 'oral' (signed) narrative, encapsulating traditional values, and passed down from generation to generation."<sup>7</sup>

McLuhan asserts that electronic media reintroduces orality and tribal culture. He feared that our literacy would deteriorate due to technology. However, paradoxically, digital technology has become a victory for the Deaf community because it assists the supremacy of the visual in sign language—a language that relies on making the aural visible.

1. H-Dirksen L. Bauman, Nelson, Jennifer L., Rose, Heidi M. *Signing the Body Poetic: Essays on American Sign Language Literature*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. xvi.

2. *ibid.* xviii.  
3. *ibid.* xviii.

4. *ibid.* xviii.

5. McLuhan, Marshall, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. (Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press 2003), p. 19.

6. Lamberti, Elena, "McLuhan's Mosaic: Verbo-vocal-visual Potentials of His Probes." for McLuhan, Marshall, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), p. xxxi.

7. Bauman, p. 232.

## MISCOMMUNICATION EXHIBITION

My work, titled *Miscommunication*, was installed at 1509 Gallery on May 5th, 2012. My work was intentionally arranged to move the audience through the space as if it was a story; from simple to complex, and ending in a positive light. I hoped to encourage the audience to consider the possibility of what it's like to be unable to access information. My work portrayed the difficulties and inconsistencies of lipreading without sound, mistaking one word for another word, and misunderstanding the overall message/bigger picture when key words are incorrectly assumed. The first part of my work highlighted the challenges of being Deaf in a hearing world. The last two pieces provided light-hearted attempts at bridging the gap between the two worlds.

The viewers were able to take their time to scrutinize and analyze the pieces. They could watch the three films, attempt to flip the gigantic flipbook, made guesses about what each flipbook said and guess what the patches represented. My goal was to make the audience think, to consider what it might be like to experience the world differently, and to consider what it might be like for those people who do.



### MISCOMMUNICATION

This exhibition encouraged the viewers to immerse themselves and interact with the pieces.





## TIMELINE: INFLUENCES AND PROCESS

AUDIENCE  
RECEPTIVITY  
GRAIDENT

AUGUST 2010

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

JANUARY 2011

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

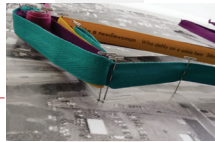
MAY

not ready to know

● nail exploration



● LED Lamplighter Banner



▲ EDWARD T. HALL

▲ KENYA HARA

▲ SHANNON AND WEAVER

● noise exploration



▲ RABY DUNNE

ready to know

ready to give opinion

ready to act

ready to advocate

### PROCESS, PROCESS

My timeline shows how my process has evolved from readings, and how they influence my work from one level to another. My projects touchbase with almost every step in David Rose's Audience Receptivity Gradient.

▲ influences (not relevant to the gradient)  
● projects

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

JANUARY 2012

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

● Lolita video



▲ DAVID S. ROSE

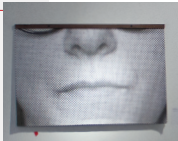
● mislipreading



● 30 sec PSA



● flipbook



● bracelet



● patch



● an eye for an ear





My journey into graduate school has been challenging, adventurous, and in many ways, surprising. In the past two years of my studies, I have faced more hard of hearing challenges in a hearing world than ever before. This became the core focus of my graduate work and master's thesis. My experiences in a vocal, language-based graduate program have shaped my goals as a graphic designer. I began to see relationships and metaphors between the ways we work as typographic designers and the ways I put together visual cues and stimuli to make sense of the audible world. Missing information versus available information—both with regard to printed information design and my own experience with sound—reflected each other in dynamic ways.

My challenges and process in graduate school defined my goals and ultimately, my trajectory as a graphic designer: to create an awareness about the Deaf experience while also fostering the notion of empathy between the viewer and the object viewed.

Throughout this creative process I questioned how to portray to viewers my everyday, mundane experiences. This task is complex due to the facility of straying into sympathetic territory. I want to educate rather than arouse pity. My goal is empathy, not sympathy. I found it was difficult when attempting to visually communicate intangible experiences. However, capturing confusion in my studies,

an important aspect of the experience, was successful. Despite the fact my advisors and peers are well informed, they were able to get it when they experienced my first typography project. The challenge was to maintain that moment into the next work using a different medium or approach. I challenged myself by researching and repurposing precedents and applied their existing approaches to my work. Unlike projects with predetermined outcomes, I managed to expand and explore similar ideas from one medium to another.

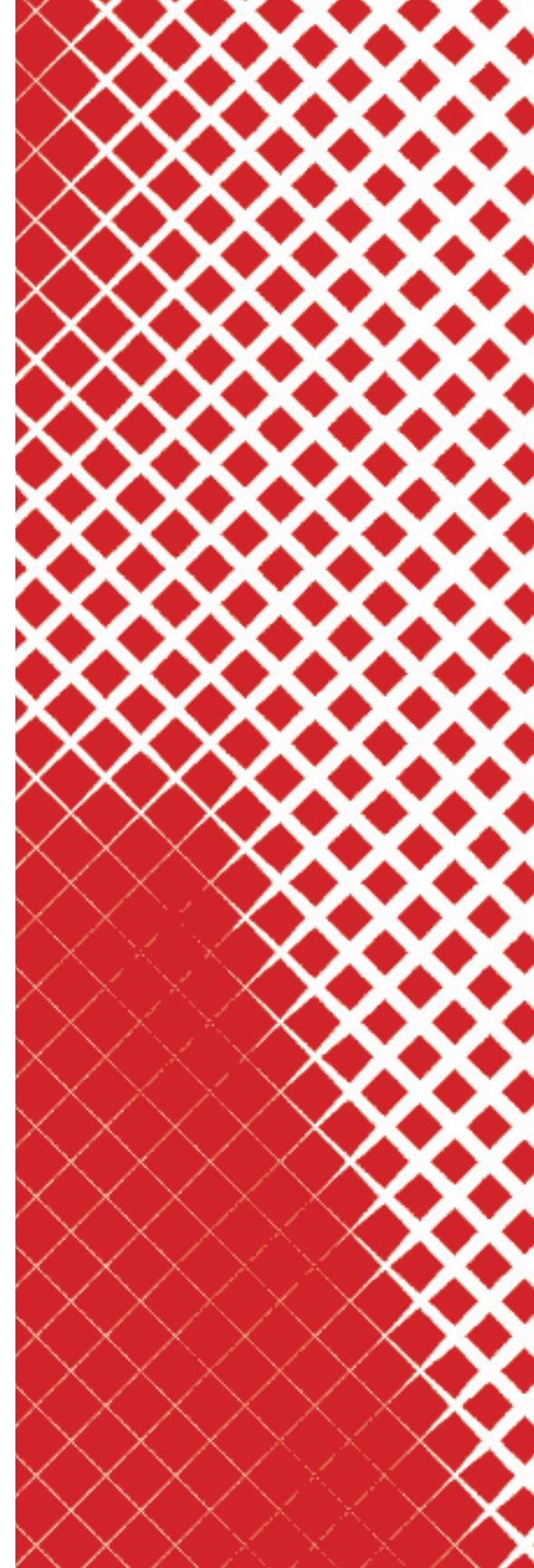
During my last semester of work, I realized two minds think better than one. My mind mysteriously processes and thinks of new ideas whenever I talk with others. Without that discussion, I think too much; I feel overwhelmed and become stuck with too many ideas. Maybe that is part of being Deaf, and I wonder if it has to do with my inability to perceive messages from radio, background conversations, or anything that is heard outside of my attention. To answer my endless thoughts, perhaps I should spill out onto my sketchbooks more often.

Reading and workshops have been a catalyst for my work as I built up a body of work over the two years as a graduate student. My personal achievements and process have redefined my role as a graphic designer to include film, product and fabric design. My typographical projects morphed into

experimental flipbooks and a 30 second PSA. Throughout all, my projects were derived from my experiences of misunderstanding others and the imperative to translate my struggles into visual ideas that could improve the experience of everyone who comes into contact with a Deaf or hard of hearing person by providing insight into how those misunderstandings often occur.

This thesis is not the ending, but rather, the beginning of my research, based on my role as a graphic designer engaged in the world of visual communication. My exploration within visual literacy has been refined by my willingness to share a vulnerability with others. My experiences are a lens by which to explore within graphic design the possibilities for clearer, more concise communication. For example, color equals tone, capitalization equals volume, size equals emphasis, and layout equals hierarchy.

In addition to the visual studies that illustrate the experiences of having a hearing impediment, this document gets to the heart of the matter with analysis and anecdotal evidence. It is my hope that the experiences shared within—documentation, videos, objects and images will provide examples for those willing to adapt to the language needs of people who are deaf or hard of hearing.



## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

65

Antonelli, Paula. *Talk to Me: Design and the Communication between People and Objects*. New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 2011. This book is based on an exhibition at MOMA, and I had a chance to observe and experience tactile, designed pieces, ranging from designed prints to interactive to 3D pieces.

Bauman, H-Dirksen L., Nelson, Jennifer L., Rose, Heidi M. *Signing the Body Poetic: Essays on American Sign Language Literature*. Berkeley; University of California Press, 2006. A collection of essays on the visual and performing arts, literary criticism and literature based on American Sign Language.

Berlo, David K. *The Process of Communication: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*. New York; Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974. Interesting analysis on communication in various views such as communication in space, distance, between two cultures, and process.

Hall, Edward T. *The Silent Language*. Garden City, N.Y.; Doubleday, 1966. Hall's sociological analysis on non verbal messages travel through space and time.

Hara, Kenya. *White*. Baden, CH: Lars Müller Publishers, 2010. Beautiful essays on one color, white. The concept of white relates with the moment of being in silence.

Nabokov, Vladimir. *The Original of Laura (Dying is Fun)*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009. Incomplete work, using note cards as his manuscript. His methods inspired me to use flashcards to visualize and research for my work.

Papanek, Victor. *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change*. 2nd Revised Edition. Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 2005. This book clarified my role as a graphic designer, and it tells me that I should be responsible in supporting and promoting my community.

Pulin, Graham. *Design meets Disability*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009. Not only the designed pieces for disabled present themselves, but they inspire and provoke people into thinking for the better.

Shannon, Claude E. and Weaver, Warren. *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971. Originally for AT&T's telephone technology in 1949, Shannon and Weaver developed a theory in communication—how the message is transmitted between two speakers. They mentioned noise, and this idea became more relevant to my experience in hearing sounds.

VIDEO:  
Hearing the Unheard — TED Presentation by Dr. Joseph Valentne, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aqV\\_MjKliW0&feature=share](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aqV_MjKliW0&feature=share)  
His lecture is about educating people that deaf people are not disabled. He emphasized that they can do many things, except to hear.



## THANK YOU

### MY COMMITTEE AND FACULTY

John Malinoski for knowledge, challenge, inspirations and eggs; Brooke Chornyak for guidance, inspirations and Pan; Carlton Newton for your other part of your brain; John Demao for support; Rob Carter for shifting my brain into another perspective; Roy McKelvey for putting my rambling thoughts in order; Steve Hoskins for getting me to delve into my projects; Sandy Wheeler for positive energy and radiant smile; Ernest Bernhardt for wisdom, knowledge and company; Anne Graves for restoring everything in order; Matt Charboneau for company and keeping things in order.

### MY VCU COLLEAGUES

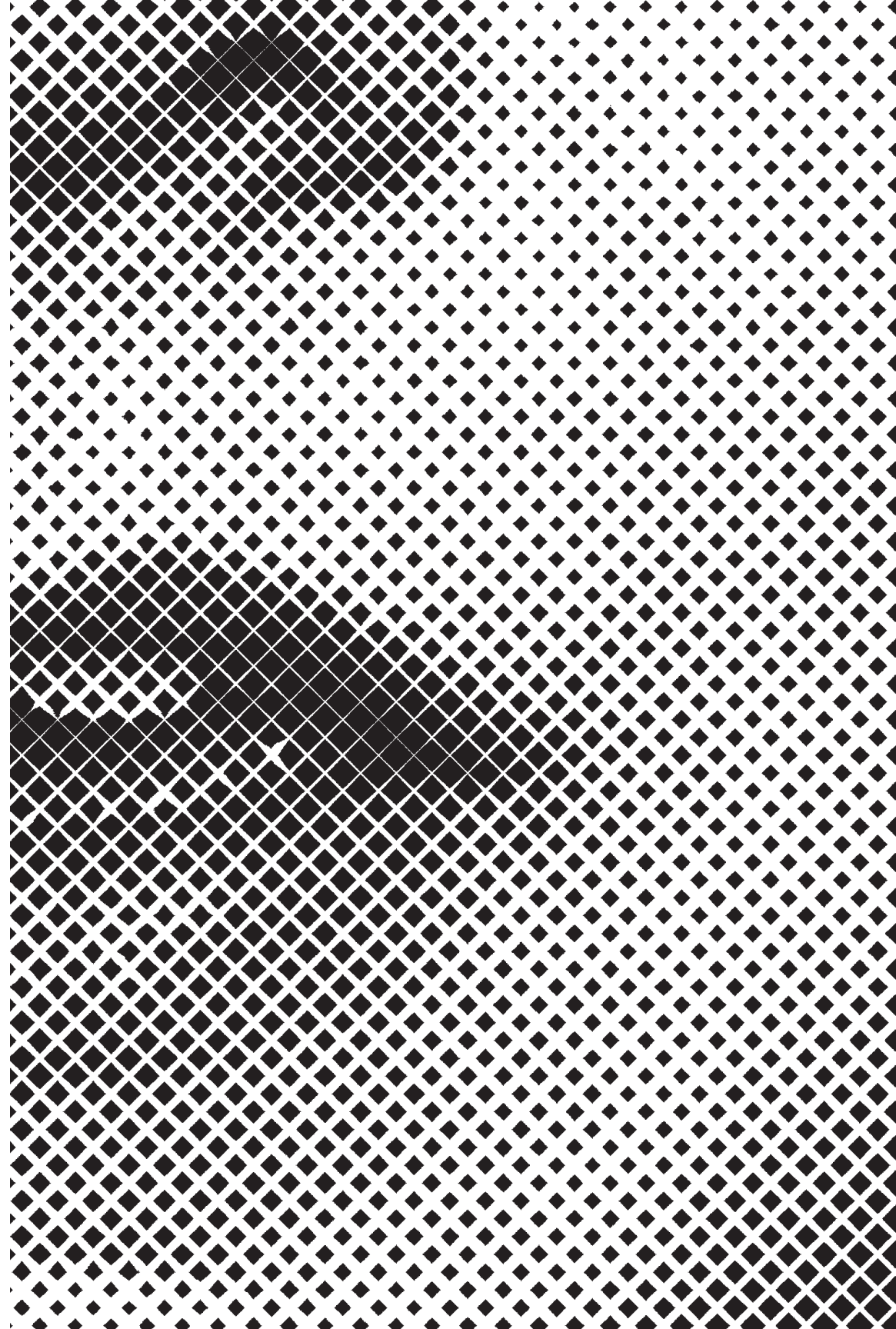
Sarah Weber, Cassie Hester, Mitch Goldstein, Anne Jordan, James Walker, Daniel Cole and Sarah Alfalah for challenges and inspirations; Jennifer Lauren Smith for making my world bigger; Dana Ollestad, Georgi Ivanov, Claire Krueger, Joe Minek, Andrew Brehm, Mary Catherine Brooks, Melissa Athey and Austin McAdams for making my world even more bigger; STUDIO 313 for being my home to my work.

### MY EXTENSION OF MY EARS

Debbie O'Berry, Majorie Bossura and Carrie Humphrey for interpreting countless hours; Samantha Witter for notetaking.

### TO MY FAMILY

Mom, Dad, and Caroline for unconditional love and support.



VIRGINIA SHOU 2013  
BFA Computer Arts  
BFA Graphic Design  
Savannah College of Art and Design  
Savannah, GA | May 2003

Submitted to the faculty of  
Virginia Commonwealth  
University's School of the Arts  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree,  
Master of Fine Arts in Design /  
Visual Communications.  
Richmond, Virginia | May 2013

---

**JOHN MALINOSKI**, PRIMARY ADVISOR  
Associate Professor, Department of Graphic Design

---

**CARLTON NEWTON**, SECONDARY ADVISOR  
Associate Professor, Department of Sculpture and Extended Media

---

**BROOKE CHORNYAK**, READER  
Assistant Professor, Departments of Art Foundation And Graphic Design

---

**JOHN DEMAO**, DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES, VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS  
Associate Professor, Department of Graphic Design

---

**DAVID SHIELDS**, CHAIR  
Associate Professor, Department of Graphic Design

---

**DR. JAMES FRAZIER**, ASSOCIATE DEAN OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
Virginia Commonwealth University, School of the Arts

---

**DR. F. DOUGLAS BOUDINOT**, DEAN OF VCU GRADUATE STUDIES  
Virginia Commonwealth University



HW

TA







